

CONSTITUTION
and
BY-LAWS
of
The Central
Congregational Church

Derry, N. H.

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The Central Congregational
Church



Derry, N. H.

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HISTORIC NOTE

This church was organized on the 3rd day of August, 1837, under the name of The First Congregational Church of Derry. The building was erected in the same year.

In 1897, by vote of the church and confirmation by the state legislature, the name was changed to The Central Congregational Church. From the beginning, however, the organization was that of the traditional New England church and society.

In 1940 it was decided to merge the two groups in an incorporated church. Letters of incorporation were therefore sought and were granted by the Secretary of State under the provisions of chapter 234 of the Public Laws of New Hampshire.

ARTICLE 1.

NAME.

The name of this church is The Central Congregational Church of Derry, New Hampshire.

ARTICLE 2.

OBJECT.

The object of the church is to bind together men and women of like purpose in making the spirit of Jesus Christ dominant in human experience.

ARTICLE 3.

POLITY.

The government of the church is vested in its members who shall exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject only in legal matters to the Articles of Incorporation. Answerable to no outside ecclesiastical authority, the church recognizes the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of Congregational churches.

ARTICLE 4.

PROPERTY.

The church reserves to itself the right to own and hold and operate its own properties. Should the church cease to exist the trustees shall make appeal to the appropriate courts for leave to dispose of the properties in accordance with the laws of the state.

ARTICLE 5.

FAITH.

The following statement is adopted as expressing in a general way the corporate faith of the church. It shall not be regarded as binding upon the individual members, the church recognizing the freedom of faith and conscience of its members in matters of belief.

We believe in God who is revealed in the scriptures, in nature, in history and human experience.

We believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the supreme revelation of the Divine; a pre-eminent guide and example for men; a teacher of the spirit whom none other excels.

We believe in Prayer as a normal and necessary means of fellowship with God.

We believe in the Christian life as an expression of a striving toward an ideal in our relation to God not only, but to our fellow men; that Christian idealism and practice offer the best and ultimate solutions for the ills of human society. We believe that the only effective and fruitful method of furthering this faith lies in organized effort and cooperation. Therefore we believe in the Church Universal as a means of education in worship and life.

We believe in the Ongoing life; that Death is but a door into a vaster and fuller experience.

ARTICLE 6.

MEMBERSHIP.

Membership in the church shall be open to all who find themselves in harmony with its spirit and purpose. They shall be accepted (1) by letter of transfer from other

churches, or (2) upon confession of their own faith.

Letters of transfer to other churches shall be granted upon request to members in regular standing. Members who have removed from the community, or who for a period of two years have manifested no interest in the church or contributed to its support may be transferred to a retired list. From the date of such transfer such person shall cease to be reported on the active membership roll. If after the expiration of three more years their addresses are still unknown, or they are unwilling to take letters of transfer or to renew their connection with the church they may be dropped from the roll. The clerk is authorized to take such action and to report same at the next annual meeting.

ARTICLE 7.

COVENANT.

All persons desirous of entering the membership of the church shall be expected to enter into the following covenant:

You covenant in the presence of God to walk with us in love. In lowliness of mind you will esteem others better than yourselves and be no respecters of persons. You will labor with us to preach the gospel by a cheerful, generous and blameless life.

You will watch over us with patience, fidelity and Christian forgiveness. You will share with us any gifts and graces that may be yours. You will study our purity, peace and prosperity, helping us to realize the truth of Jesus' words: the kingdom of God is within you.

This you now heartily confess and promise, looking to God to help you in the performance.

ARTICLE 8.

SERVICES AND SACRAMENTS.

The services and meetings of the church shall be as follows:

1. Services of worship shall be held at given times each Sunday, except when temporarily suspended by weather conditions or by the vote of the church.
2. The Sacrament of our Lord's Supper shall be observed on the first Sundays in October, December, February and June, and on the evening of Maundy Thursday. These dates may, however, be changed at the discretion of the minister and Board of Deacons.
3. The Baptism of adults and the Baptism (or Consecration) of children shall be administered at such times as the minister shall appoint.

Observance of the sacraments shall be considered a privilege and not be obligatory upon any member.

4. Other services for worship, study or prayer may be held as determined by the minister and (or) the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE 9.

BUSINESS MEETINGS.

The annual meeting of the church shall be held on the second Wednesday of January in each year, unless by vote of the Trustees and Deacons another date shall be determined. Its purpose shall be to hear the yearly reports of officers and organizations, to elect officers, adopt a budget and set up plans for the new year.

This meeting shall be called by the clerk by having notice of same read from the pulpit on the two preceding Sundays and by posting such notice in the vestibule of the church. The clerk will also prepare an agenda for other meetings.

Special meetings for business may be called by the minister and the trustees and deacons, notice of same being given in the same manner as for the annual meeting.

Voting privileges are extended to all members and non-member regular contributors who are upward of eighteen years of age; except that in financial matters only those whose names are upon the current roll of

regular contributors shall be entitled to vote. A quorum for all business meetings shall consist of twenty-five voting members, except as otherwise prescribed in these by-laws.

ARTICLE 10.

OFFICERS.

The officers of the church shall be the following:

1. *The Minister* who shall be called for an indefinite period. When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, the church shall appoint a committee of not less than five members to seek a successor, settle upon one, and at a duly called meeting propose his election.

The Minister shall be the moderator of the church. He shall perform the duties which ordinarily pertain to his office, preside at all meetings and services, and be ex-officio a member of all boards and committees.

While the Minister shall be called for an indefinite period, he shall be free to resign at any time, it being understood that he shall give the church at least three months notice of his intention to do so. On the other hand, the church may dissolve the pastoral relationship by the following procedure: A meeting of currently contributing members shall be called by a joint vote of the trustees and deacons, notice of such meeting being read at the Sunday morning service on the two preceding Sundays. A

quorum of sixty shall be required, with a two-thirds majority vote necessary for action. The minister shall then be entitled to not less than three months notice. Except that if at any time the minister shall lose his ministerial standing the pastoral relationship shall be terminated forthwith.

2. *A Vice-Moderator* to be chosen at the annual meeting and to serve for one year. He shall preside at business meetings in the absence of or at the request of the moderator.

3. *A Clerk* to be elected at each annual meeting. He (or she) shall keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the church. He shall keep a register of the members of the church, with dates and modes of their reception and removal; also a record of baptisms, deaths, and marriages. He shall issue letters of transfer, preserve on file all communications and written reports, give legal notices of all meetings and perform such other duties as are prescribed by law or as usually pertain to the office of a clerk.

4. *A Financial Secretary*. He shall be elected at the annual meeting, shall receive all payments on current expense and benevolent subscriptions; take charge of offerings; keep an accurate account with each subscriber, and pay all moneys received to the treasurer.

5. *The Treasurer* to be elected at the annual meeting. He shall receive all moneys from the financial secretary and other moneys of the church. He shall deposit funds in such depository as the trustees shall direct. Under direction of the trustees he shall have the custody of all papers relating to the property of the church. He shall pay the bills of the church on order from the trustees, and shall keep accurate account of all receipts and disbursements. The treasurer shall, with the approval of the trustees, contract with some trust company, national bank or other approved financial institution to invest endowments, legacies, trust funds and permanent funds, the income from the same to be paid the treasurer in regular installments.

6. Other officers may be elected as need shall dictate.

ARTICLE 11.

BOARDS.

The Board of Deacons shall consist of four members of the church, of whom one shall be elected annually for a term of four years. After serving two full terms a deacon shall be ineligible for one year for re-election. It shall be the duty of the deacons to co-operate with the minister in ministering to the spiritual interests of the church. They shall assist him in the administration of the sacrament and perform such other duties as

usually pertain to deacons in Congregational churches.

The Board of Deaconesses shall consist of four members, one of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting for a term of four years. After serving two full terms a deaconess shall be ineligible for re-election until after the lapse of one year. The deaconesses shall co-operate with the minister in promoting the spiritual interests of the church. They shall have charge of the preparation of the communion service, visit the sick, especially those of their own sex, call upon new members and perform such other duties as pertain to deaconesses in Congregational churches.

The Board of Trustees shall consist of four members, elected for terms of four years in such manner that the term of one member shall expire annually. After serving two full terms a trustee shall be ineligible for re-election for one year. At least three of the board of trustees shall be members of the church.

Under the direction of the church the trustees shall have the custody and care and maintenance of the property of the church and have charge of its financial affairs. They shall prepare and present a budget at the annual meeting, and shall provide for the raising of the necessary funds to meet same. They shall authorize the treasurer as to the

payment of moneys under their control, and subject to article 13 of these by-laws shall have charge of the permanent funds. They shall make a full report of their activities at each annual meeting.

The senior member of each board shall act as chairman unless otherwise agreed. Wherever a vacancy occurs in either the boards of deacons, deaconesses or trustees the remaining members of such board shall choose a new member to serve for the unexpired term.

The Church Council shall consist of the minister as chairman, the clerk, the treasurer, the financial secretary, the chairman of the several boards and the heads of the several organizations. It shall be the function of the council to co-operate with the minister in formulating the program of the church, and it may act for the church in minor matters, always assuming that unless such action is taken with practical unanimity it must have the confirmation of the church. A meeting of this council shall be called by the moderator at least twice each year.

ARTICLE 12.

COMMITTEES.

Nominating Committee. At least three months before the annual meeting the minister shall appoint a committee to prepare nominations for all officers, boards and com-

mittees provided by these by-laws and not otherwise provided for. In case any nominees, after being elected, shall decline to serve the committee shall name a substitute.

The Religious Education Committee shall have the supervision of the religious and educational work of the church. It shall consist of three members, one of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting. The committee shall be authorized to appoint a superintendent of the Sunday School who shall thereupon become ex-officio a member of the committee.

Other committees may be appointed as needed by the minister or by the church council.

ARTICLE 13.

FINANCES.

The church shall seek support for current expenses and benevolent causes by contributions of individuals and organizations. Opportunity shall be offered to all members of the church and parish to make written subscriptions, ordinarily under the every-member canvass plan. Auxiliary organizations shall be invited to contribute. The designation of moneys for current expenses, benevolences, and specific objects shall be under plans approved by the church.

Permanent Funds. All legacies and special gifts not specifically designated by the do-

nors for some other purpose shall be set aside in the permanent fund, the income only of which shall be used. Except that in case of an undesignated gift, the church may by a majority vote use same for some special object. The permanent funds shall be placed in trust by the treasurer under orders of the board of trustees with a trust company or some other reliable fiduciary institution.

ARTICLE 14.

AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS.

All organizations connected with the church and using its property are regarded as integral parts of the church and under its general oversight. They shall make reports of their activities at the annual meeting.

ARTICLE 15.

AMENDMENTS.

These by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote at any regular or special meeting, provided that a notice specifying the time of the meeting and the substance of the proposed amendment shall have been given from the pulpit on the two preceding Sundays, except that articles 1 to 5 and the second paragraph of article 13 may be amended only by a three-fourths vote of resident members and regular contributors, and at a meeting at which not less than sixty of such persons shall be present, the proposed

amendment and the date of meeting having been read before the congregation on three preceding Sundays.

ARTICLE 16.

PREVIOUS BY-LAWS.

These by-laws shall supersede any that may have been adopted at earlier dates.

Adopted this 15th day of November, 1956.

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